

# Cost Of Screen Productions

## Amazing

Recent picture flashed on screen for only 18 seconds cost the producer more than \$12,000—Just imagine the picture you are watching costing \$714 for every second you watch it—Some are higher, others are lower



DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS and FRED STONE CAUGHT IN ACTION



THE HAMMER HEAD SHARK IN THE BACKGROUND WAS HARPOONED BY WILLIAM FARNUM at MIAMI

**H**AVE you any conception of the cost of the screen productions you pay your money to see?

Have you ever stopped to think of the amount of money that is necessary to produce a good screen play?

Did you ever wonder what David W. Griffith expended to produce 'The Birth of a Nation'?

Possibly you have not, except in a casual way.

Few spectators give it a thought, and for that matter, don't care a whoop whether it cost in the hundreds or thousands of dollars, just so it is a good screen production and they get to see it and it entertains and amuses them.

However, there are a few who are interested in the cost of the production they are witnessing, just as they are in the cost of everything they need in a personal way.

Screen productions are figured in the thousands of dollars, though, instead of in the hundreds.

Some conception of the cost of a production, however, is to be had from one of the greatest products of the cinema studios, Allen Holubar's 'The Heart of Humanity.' Several 'big scenes' in this notable picture flash on the screen for no more than twenty seconds, yet, individually, they cost sums ranging far into the thousands of dollars. Indeed, in the Holubar production, in several instances the most costly scenes ever translated to the screen are to be observed.

In one instance, by way of illustration, only eighteen seconds are required to project the pictured incident on the silver sheet. Yet in its entirety, this eighteen seconds' bit of entertainment totals a gross expenditure of

over \$12,000. Itemized, the bill stands thus:

Salaries of principals.....	\$1,840
Salaries of "extras".....	9,423
Salaries of cameramen.....	150
Cost of setting properties.....	1,439
<b>Total.....</b>	<b>\$12,852</b>

Rehearsals and actual performance and photographing covered a period of three days. A total of 1,947 extra men and women, in addition to the principals, participated in the making of the scene. "Extras" receive \$3 a day, or, for the three-day period, each extra received \$9. Similarly the salaries of the principals are to be charged to the debit account, as are also those of the three cameramen. Cost of setting and of properties explains itself, but in this case there was no salvage, for the setting, a row of houses, was blown to atoms by dynamite.

**Incidental Items Run Cost Into Thousands.**

Other items could be added to the total—the cost of the explosive, the cost of the film, the cost of editing, the cost of cutting, the cost of prints, and of numerous incidentals. But the main figures suffice for the purposes of illustration.

In short, to afford the picture-going public eighteen seconds of concentrated "thrill" it cost the Universal company \$12,852. Just for eighteen seconds' enjoyment on the screen; as far as the public is concerned. And this was only one of five or six massive scenes set before the spectator in 'The Heart of Humanity.' David Griffith today is unable to tell the exact cost of many of the massive scenes in the 'Birth of the Nation,' the first

really big war play presented to screen fans.

Per second the cost is \$714. Just sit, and think that while you are watching the show that the cost to the producer to make amusement for you is at the rate of \$714 a second. Then consider how long you watch the show in seconds and figure it up for yourself.

The cost per foot of film is the same for a foot of film flashes through the projector every second. Stated thus in concrete form, this seems to be a prodigious sum—this \$714 per second, to pay for amusement.

And there is no denying that this is a huge sum.

Nowhere else, not on the stage, not under the canvas top of the circus, nowhere else save on the screen, could such an expenditure be hazarded. But the success of such plays as 'The Birth of a Nation,' 'The Heart of Humanity' and other big productions, with their bigness and tremendous interest, more than justify the enormous outlay of money. Besides it could not be done for a penny less.

Another idea of the tremendous outlay of money that is necessary to complete movie productions is in the recent announcement that Roscoe Arbuckle, the biggest screen comedian, has just negotiated the biggest movie contract ever signed and which aggregates \$3,000,000.

Other stars have signed big contracts, too. Charlie Chaplin and Douglas Fairbanks are credited with big contracts around the \$1,500,000 mark. Fatty Arbuckle, however, will do time for the next three years with the Famous-Players-Lasky, which places Arbuckle in a class by himself.

**Making People Laugh Is an Expensive Business.**

In talking with "Fatty" on the matter of making people laugh, we find that it is quite a serious and expensive business with Arbuckle, who says "that no price is too high to pay for a good laugh."

The amusement-loving public makes it mandatory. They don't care a rap

about the cost.

But here is where the rub comes in. By reducing this question of price on humor to dollars and cents, the rub comes in the fact that no expert, however steeped in humor and versed in risibilities of the average motion-picture audience, has any means of knowing just what situation will strike the responsive note in the great American public's gamut of humor, the range of which extends from the sneaking snicker to the roar which makes it necessary to hold one's sides and come up for air.

The very uncertainty of laugh making and laugh getting in their relation to each other is responsible for the high cost of laughter, as figured from the standpoint of the mirth manufacturer who strives to keep his business on a sound basis.

Then there is the high-salaried scenario staff, which must be as carefully inoculated against gloom germs as the American Army is against typhoid fever. Of course, there are few men who have not a deep and abiding belief in their own sense of humor, but the man who is funny and can make the public think he is funny is about the rarest form of masculinity extant, and, of course, can command his own price. All this goes to make screen productions more expensive.

Arbuckle is one of the few actors who builds his scenarios as he works on a picture, though naturally he finds it essential to find some sort of a skeleton to follow.

One of the most expensive item is that of sets and scenery. The sets erected for comedies which have never been seen outside of the studios are more numerous than the scenarios which never travel further than the script man's capacious waste basket. And that is what some might call an extravagant statement, but is true, nevertheless.

"Fatty" Arbuckle tells one on himself which shows that scenes, even after expending thousands of dollars on them, fail to make the public laugh. He lately imported all of the stock from a large Connecticut estate to his studio floor for just one scene in the picture which at the most meant only a few feet of film. The chickens, ducks, mules, goats, cattle and pigs were shipped and all given room and board at the studio for a matter of three weeks. The bill was enough to make the close-fisted spender gasp.

And now brace yourself for the shock, for here is what happened. The entire scene, which was built to be funny, was an utter failure and the entire scene was a total loss. It was one of the cases where the laugh that the actor failed to get was much more costly than many an uproar which has been put across at no extra expense.

**Clothes Cost Much Money, Time and Worry.**

Clothes probably cause more worry to both the actors and actresses than any other one thing with which they have to contend. While the producers do not stand the expense of expensive clothing, the star actor and actress spend thousands of dollars on wardrobes.

VIOLA DANA in "SATAN JUNIOR"



NAZIMOVA in "OUT of the FOG"

"Fatty" Arbuckle, in talking of his clothes and the enormous amount of money wasted in this respect, recently said: "I have to have everything I wear before the camera, even to my rube clothing, made to order, so that I may have something that fits my size properly or improperly, according to the nature of the scene. Heaven only knows how many suits of expensive suits I have had ruined by a garden hose, a flour tussle or an ice cream battle. Only the other day I ordered a pair of trousers of the customary generous dimensions, but of unusually good material, and do you think I was able to wear them more than once? Nothing of the sort. They decided that the trousers had to be cut full of holes in order to get the desired effect. And so it goes."

High-priced actors and actresses forget for the moment their immense salaries at the call of war. Probably one of the most self-sacrificing conclusions was made by Irene Castle, wife of the late Vernon Castle, who lost his life in the performance of war duty. Irene Castle was among the famous women who gave up her profession and her pleasures to help win the war. Mrs. Castle called for England and sought work that would benefit her fellow-man, rather than herself. The king and queen commanded her to appear before them, and she promptly went their hearts. When Gen. Joffre visited England, Mrs. Castle was called upon to help the Wellcome Entertainment Committee and her tireless work brought forth grateful praise from her associates. Her real work in the war, however, seldom came to the attention of the public. Thousands of English and American soldiers will remember for a long time to come the name of Irene Castle, her charm, her heartening smile and her tireless effort to make them forget their sufferings.

Irene Castle's war work has been accomplished. She has just returned to America. There has been much speculation as to the future activities of this famous woman. On her arrival here, Mrs. Castle was besieged with theatrical and motion picture offers of every description. Rumors had her going on the "legitimate" stage in dramatic play; another reported her going into vaudeville in a new dancing sketch; still another said she would retire. All of these have been flouted by an announcement that Irene Castle has been signed to appear in Robert Chambers' famous story, 'The Firing Line.' Mrs. Castle, it is said, will receive an enormous sum for her contract with Famous-Players-Lasky people. And so the price of producing pictures goes up.

Doris Kenyon, the motion picture star, tells of the heavy expense attached to trying to make a horse yawn at the proper time. Once when they were down in North Carolina taking pictures for 'Twilight,' it took eight hours to make the horse yawn at the critical time. It also exhausted the patience of every one in the company and cost \$1,150 to get the horse to yawn at the proper time. The yawn represented about 12 feet of film, or cost at the rate of \$100 per foot. It all happened this way:

Offer Fifty Dollars To Make the Horse Yawn.

"We had started out early one morning and the first scene that we took showed Frank Mills, my leading man, and I returning from a buggy ride. In 'Twilight,' I am a mountain girl and Mr. Mills is a lumberman in love with me. In our parts we were so engrossed in each other during the ride that we failed to notice when we reached the barn. We finally realized where we were and jumped out, only to re-new the love-making while we were standing at the horse's head. It was while this was being taken that the horse accidentally yawned. Of course, the camera was not in action at the time, but we all realized what a splendid bit of comedy it would be to get that yawn into the picture.

"J. Searle Dawley, the director, decided to stop for it. All other work was stopped and for eight hours every member of the company practiced every artifice imaginable to make that old white horse yawn. We worked mental telepathy, auto-suggestion and moral suasion, but still that horse merely looked bored. We yawned ourselves until our jaws ached and offered a reward of \$50 to anyone in the neighborhood who could make the horse yawn.

"All of this time the camera was trained upon him for a close-up, but he heeded it not. Finally, when the sun was just about to disappear and we were ready to give up in despair, the old horse switched his tail, looked around at Mr. Mills and I, who had been standing there all the time, and then gave three of the most disgusted yawns in which a bored horse ever indulged.

"There was no more work for us that day, but we all felt perfectly satisfied, for we had secured one of the best bits of comedy that ever went into a picture."

The cost of production is not alone the chief worry of the producer. The girls, it seems, come in for more than their share of the expense, incidental to the production of a picture.

Girls, we all know, must be daintily shod, but what about the motion picture stars, who must buy and wear new shoes in every picture? I have previously touched upon the fact that the movie star's wardrobe is an expensive detail, cutting quite a slice in the pay envelope—but the shoes. Above everything else, a movie queen must be well shod. She must have a pretty foot and it must be fitted with an expensive shoe. I know of one screen girl who was obliged to buy five new pairs of shoes for one picture. There was a close-up of her pedal extremities with golf shoes and another with dancing shoes, and, of course, they were necessarily new.

## Thumb An Index To Character

**I**N regard to size, there are three kinds of thumbs—long, short and medium.

If the tip of the thumb reaches to the middle of the third phalanx of the index finger, it is a medium-sized thumb. If beyond that, it is long; if it falls short of it, the thumb is short. To be exact in the measurement, the thumb should be brought close to the side of the extended hand.

By frequent observation of the thumbs of persons one meets with daily it soon becomes easy to ascertain, even by the most cursory view, whether they belong to the long, short or medium class.

The next point to be determined is whether the first or the second phalanx is the longer one. Remember that when the phalanges are referred to hereafter, the first always means the one which has the nail. So, likewise, in regard to the fingers,

The first phalanx represents the will power, and by its length shows the amount of will power the person possesses. The degree of thickness of the phalanx indicates the quality of his will power; that is, whether it is refined or coarse. The more slender the phalanx, the more refined will be the manner in which the will power expresses itself.

The second phalanx represents the mentality of the person; and the rules, as those just mentioned, apply here in respect to length and thickness as indices of quantity and quality.

These rules will suffice for the day. It is essential that they be well borne in mind, as they are fundamental, and in proportion to one's ability to apply them to the individual cases will be his progress in the ability to decide at a glance just what class a person belongs to.

Practice makes perfect in this

branch of knowledge no less than in any other. It is therefore suggested that the student becomes accustomed to note as many hands as an opportunity affords. This may be done without attracting attention. In street cars or other public places, after one has made a more minute study of the subject by examining one's own hands and those of friends and acquaintances who will be only too glad to aid the student in so diverting a research.

Perhaps the question will suggest to you, what difference there is between will and mind that should warrant ascribing the former to the first phalanx and the other to the second phalanx. In most works on psychology the 'will' is spoken of as one of the properties of the mind, and therefore at the first blush it might occur to the student of thumb-wisdom that both phalanges might with equal propriety be considered as relating to the mind.